

CHAPTER 1

Calling out the Greeks: Dynamics of the Elegiac Canon

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Quintilian names Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid as the canonical poets of Roman elegy. His comments are brief enough that they can be quoted in full:

Elegia quoque Graecos provocamus, cuius mihi tersus atque elegans maxime videtur auctor Tibullus. Sunt qui Propertium malint. Ovidius utroque lascivior, sicut durior Gallus.

(Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.93)

In elegy too we challenge the Greeks; I think its most polished and elegant author is Tibullus, but there are those who prefer Propertius. Compared to either of these Ovid is rather unrestrained, just as Gallus is rather stiff.

(All translations are my own)

In spite of his brevity, Quintilian gives us a lot to discuss; but his brevity itself deserves comment. Of all genres only iambus receives as skimpy treatment as elegy, each occupying about 1% of Quintilian's canon. Moreover, Quintilian says that the Romans never really treated iambus as a proper genre, whereas he considers elegy a genre in which Roman writers successfully challenge the Greeks for supremacy. Why then does he say so little about it?

Quintilian's Roman canon is of course modeled on an earlier Greek one, and it may be important that he has even less to say about Greek elegy, which he dispatches in a single sentence of sixteen words. (The relevant portion is italicized in the passage quoted below.) And the way Quintilian introduces Greek elegy is telling, as well. After discussing epic poetry, Quintilian mentions elegy via an elaborate *praeteritio* designed to anticipate complaints that he ignores a great number of capable poets. His justification?

Nec sane quisquam est tam procul a cognitione eorum remotus ut non indicem certe ex bibliotheca sumptum transferre in libros suos possit. Nec ignoro igitur quos transeo nec utique damno, ut qui dixerim esse in omnibus utilitatis aliquid. Sed ad illos iam perfectis constitutisque viribus revertemur: quod in cenis grandibus saepe facimus, ut, cum optimis satiati sumus, varietas tamen nobis ex vilioribus grata sit. *tunc et elegiam vacabit in manus sumere, cuius princeps habetur Callimachus, secundas confessione plurimorum Philitas occupavit.* Sed dum adsequimur illam firmam, ut dixi, facilitatem, optimis adsuescendum est et multa magis quam multorum lectione formanda mens et ducendus color.

(Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.57–59)

Neither is there anyone so far from understanding these things that he could not transfer into his own books a catalogue taken from a library. Nor am I, therefore, unaware of the writers whom I pass over. And, certainly, I do not condemn them, having already said that there is something useful in all. But we shall return to them when our powers have been established and made perfect: as we often do in great banquets, so that that after we are sated with the best dishes, the variety of plainer food is still pleasant. *Then we shall have time to take up even elegy, of which Callimachus is considered the principal author and Philitas, in the opinion of most, has taken second place.* But while acquiring that solid ability, as I said, we must grow accustomed to the best, and one's mind must be formed, one's style informed, by reading much rather than many.

Elegy is the only Greek genre to receive such ostentatiously marginalizing treatment. In comparison, Quintilian's remarks about the Roman elegists, scanty as they are, seem that much more impressive. One might almost wonder whether Quintilian ever did read Callimachus and Philitas.

Perhaps this all has something to do with the fact that Quintilian simply takes both canons directly from the Roman elegists themselves. Propertius opens his third book with the following invocation:

Callimachi manes et Coi sacra Philitae,
in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.
primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos
Italia per Graios orgia ferre choros.

(Prop. 3.1.1–4)

Shades of Callimachus and sacraments belonging to Philitas of Cos, permit me, please, to enter your grove. I am the first to attempt to combine Italian revelry with Greek ceremony, drawing inspiration as your priest from a pristine source.

No doubt Propertius is following a Greek critical tradition that named these poets to the elegiac canon. But his decision to invoke them – to call them out – as predecessors is significant, as we shall see. Some years later, Ovid would name Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, and himself as the canonical poets of Roman elegy:

Vergilium vidi tantum, nec avara Tibullo
tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.
successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;
quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui.

(Ov. *Tr.* 4.10.51–54)

Vergil I merely saw, nor did miserly fate give Tibullus much time to be my friend. He was your successor, Gallus, and Propertius his: with the passage of time I myself was fourth after them.

So Quintilian basically repeats what Propertius and Ovid said while they were attempting to define a Roman elegiac canon on the model of the Greek one and to inscribe themselves into it. This is not to say that Quintilian is wrong or eccentric: most people in his day as now probably agreed about who the canonical authors of Roman elegy were, because Propertius and Ovid were obviously successful in defining the canon on terms favorable to themselves. But, if Quintilian had undertaken any real comparison between these Greek and Roman canons, it is difficult to imagine what he would have said; because elegy as written by Callimachus and Philitas and elegy as written at Rome are almost totally different genres.

If we define canonical Greek elegy as the sort of poetry written by Callimachus and Philitas, then we are speaking of mythological narratives often of some length. Callimachus' *Aetia* was a four-book collection of poems on the origins of various Greek cultural institutions in which the poet's persona is exclusively that of an extraordinarily erudite researcher. Love, although it figures in such stories as "Acontius and Cydippe" (fr. 67–75 Pf) and "The Lock of Berenice" (fr. 110 Pf), is hardly among Callimachus' principal themes. Philitas' persona must have also have emphasized erudition – he is remembered as the prototypical Alexandrian *poeta doctus* or "poet and critic in one" (ποιητής ἄμα καὶ κριτικός, Strabo 14.2.19, 657c) – but we are also told that he wrote because he was in love with a woman named Bittis (more on this below). If this is true, then Philitas must have represented himself as a lover, something that Callimachus (except in some epigrams) did not do. As for Philitas, so far as we know, mythology was his principal subject. His own longing for Bittis may have been a device to "explain" his interest in the myths and to provide a frame for them. But in any case, both Callimachus and Philitas are known to have written third-person, narrative elegies.

If, however, we define Roman elegy as the kind of poetry that Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid wrote, we find that it is very different. All of them wrote in the first person, each about a love affair with a particular woman (or, in Tibullus' case, with two different women successively). The names of these women suggest Greek culture and literary sophistication (Randall 1979). The women themselves are represented as lacking the status of citizen birth and as living off their attractiveness to the kind of men the poets make themselves out to be (James 2002, 37–41). The persona of the lover boasts a literary culture beyond any rival and just enough wealth that actual work never enters into consideration, but not so much that he fails to resent the lady's demands for gifts – the main area in which those less cultivated rivals actually can surpass him (James 2002, 71–107). The poet/lover therefore lives in a state of constant jealousy, enthrallment, and inability to satisfy the whims of his *domina* – his "mistress" in more than the modern sense because the word connotes actual domination, as over a slave (Copley 1947; Lilja 1965, 71–89; Lyne 1979; Murgatroyd 1981; McCarthy 1998; Fitzgerald 2000, 72–77). A recurrence, sometimes morbid and sometimes humorous, to the theme of death is also in evidence (Gibson 2005, 171). Each poet makes his own variations on these themes, but the basic elements are the same. Mythology is a frequent point of reference, but straightforward mythological narrative (as in Prop. 1.20) is rare. The poems are

generally brief, and the ensembles do not involve the elaborate framing devices employed by Callimachus or (perhaps) Philitas.

Two very different canons, then – a situation that we do not find in any other genre that Quintilian mentions. How did it come about? We can best answer this question by investigating the pre-history of Quintilian's canons – which, of course, did not simply spring into being all of a sudden, but were the end result of a dynamic process of poetic and critical self-fashioning that began in the Hellenistic period and took a long time to complete.

The Proto-canon of Hermesianax and Its Influence

Representing Greek elegy as a proper genre was a challenge for Hellenistic canon makers (Murray 2010). From the perspective of Roman elegy, two poets from Colophon, an Ionian city not far from Ephesus, were an important part of this process. Mimnermus belongs to the seventh century BCE, and his works survive only in excerpts quoted by later writers. But these tell us that he collected his elegies and dedicated them to a *hetaira* called Nanno. It seems more than just possible that he provided a model for his countryman Antimachus, who in the late fifth century also named an elegiac poem after his beloved, Lyde – a foreigner, as her name (“woman from Lydia”) shows. The two poets are frequently mentioned together, as they are in *Leontium*, another elegiac poem which was composed in about 330 BCE by Hermesianax – also of Colophon! – and which he also named after his mistress. This is quite a tradition of erotic elegy produced within a single Greek city (Spanoudakis 2001).

Leontium, like the elegies of Callimachus and Philitas, seems mainly to have told mythological love stories in the third person, like that of Polyphemus and Galatea (fr. 1 Powell). But an entertaining passage from the third and last book of the poem (fr. 7 Powell) gives a catalogue of poets and philosophers who felt the pangs of love. Here Hermesianax mentions three elegiac poets, Mimnermus, Antimachus, and Philitas. Of Mimnermus we learn that he loved Nanno and that “he suffered much and invented the sweet sound and spirit of the soft pentameter” (Μίμνερμος δὲ, τὸν ἡδὺν ὃς εὗρετο πολλὸν ἀνατλάς / ἦχον καὶ μαλακοῦ πνεῦμα τὸ πενταμέτρου, 35–36). This is important for representing Mimnermus as the inventor of elegiac poetry in response to his lovesickness – which is effectively to define elegy as love poetry. We next learn that Antimachus was “struck by love for Lydian Lyde ... and wept when she died and placed her under the dry earth ... and filled his sacred books with laments” (Λυδῆς Ἀντίμαχος Λυδηίδος ἐκ μὲν ἔρωτος / πληγεῖς ... θανοῦσαν ὑπὸ ξηρὴν θέτο γαῖαν / κλαίων ... γόων δ' ἐνεπλήσατο βίβλους / ἱράς 41–46; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 106b–c). Again Hermesianax associates elegy with love for a particular woman and adds the important element of grief to that of erotic longing. Philitas, the last poet named in the entire catalogue, is cast in the same mold: “you know as well the poet ... Philitas, who sang of nimble Bittis” (οἶσθα δὲ καὶ τὸν αἰοδόν ... Βιττίδα μολπάζοντα θοήν ... Φιλίταν, 75–77). Why exactly Bittis should be “nimble” is something of a puzzle. In this regard, it is tempting to follow those who render θοήν as “fickle” (Knox 1993, 66; Bing 2003, 341 n. 44), thus introducing the theme of rivalry into the mix. In any case, the facts are these: Our catalogue is found in an elegiac poem. It names three elegiac poets in the company of others

representing such genres as epic, lyric, and tragedy. It thus implies that elegy is to be considered a genre on the same terms as they. In fact, it emphasizes elegy especially by naming three elegiac poets, as compared with no more than two from any other genre. It names Mimnermus as inventor of this genre and concludes with Philitas, making elegy the only genre that is represented as having a history that extends from the distant past to the present day. Finally, the elegists mentioned are all characterized as poet-lovers, each devoted to particular woman, at least one of them a courtesan, a second foreign, and the third fickle. Finally, all three of them share their names with an elegiac poetry book.

Canon formation is not a disinterested process, especially in the case of someone who is poet and critic in one. It is hard not to infer that Hermesianax – perhaps following the teachings of Philitas – designed this part of his poem as a capsule history of Greek love elegy. Far from being mere reportage, it is instead a speech act, a calling into being of the tradition to which the poet presents himself as heir. And in establishing his pedigree, he consigns all other forms of early Greek elegy to oblivion. The catalogue is therefore important not only for what it says, but for what it does not say, for if we survey the earlier elegiac poets whom Hermesianax does not name, we find them an interesting if miscellaneous bunch.

The great Archilochus, whose name was chiefly identified with iambic poetry, composed elegiacs on martial themes, and his contemporaries Callinus of Ephesus and Tyrtaeus of Sparta used elegy to exhort their countrymen to virtue in battle. The Athenian statesman Solon adapted this approach to the civic sphere. Theognis of Megara, operating in the private setting of the symposium, blends reflection on civic themes with other characteristic motifs of sympotic poetry. Love is prominent among all these poets, although for Theognis it is the idealized man/boy relationship between *erastes* and *eromenos* that matters. These poets belong to the same period as Mimnermus; yet Hermesianax ignores them and states simply that Mimnermus “invented” (εὑρετο) the genre in response to his love for the woman Nanno.

Hermesianax, besides ignoring these other poets, excludes any hint of their characteristic themes from his treatment of other genres. Thus Homer (27–34) is represented not as a martial poet but as a kind of Pygmalion figure who fell in love with his own creation, Penelope. Alcaeus (47–50), later remembered for his civic themes (*Lesbio ... civi*, Hor. *Carm.* 1.32.5), appears (anachronistically) as rival (cf. Bittis’ fickleness) to Anacreon for the love of Sappho; while Anacreon himself (51–56), whose erotic poetry (like that of Theognis) focuses on *eromenoi*, is represented as a lover of women. Sophocles (57–60), also a celebrated *erastes* (Ath. 13, 603e–604f), appears here as the lover of Theoris, (Ath. 13, 592a; *Vita Soph.* 13; Hesychius Θ 476); while Euripides (61–68), formerly hateful to all women (because of how he depicted them in his plays, Ar. *Thesm.* 81–87), ends up pursuing a serving girl. In effect, by excluding certain characteristic themes from the genres of epic, lyric, and tragedy Hermesianax assimilates all three genres to the condition of elegy as he wishes to define it.

One aspect of the elegiac tradition that Hermesianax does not exclude has to do with death and lamentation. During the Classical period the epitaph was an extremely widespread form of elegiac verse. It may be partly responsible for the idea that elegy (etymologized either as an expression of grief, ἔλεγεῖν, “to cry woe, woe,” or as “eulogy,” εὐλέγειν: *Etym. magn.* 326.48; Orion *Etym.* col. 58.7 Sturz) was the appropriate genre for funeral poetry. Simonides of Ceos was remembered mainly as a lyricist, but he was

especially celebrated for his funeral poetry (Dion. Hal. *De imit.* 2.2.6; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.64) including his epitaphs, virtually all of which are in elegiacs. Modern appreciation of his stature as an elegist was enhanced by the discovery of a poem commemorating those who died in the Battle of Plataea in 479 (Parsons 1992). This gave us an important Classical example in which the characteristic concerns of the epitaph are developed in a substantial elegiac poem that was read for a long time and was influential: the papyrus that preserves it dates to the second century CE and echoes have been found in Horace, as well (Barchiesi 1996a, 1996b).

Hermesianax acknowledges elegy as poetry of lamentation when he mentions Antimachus' mourning for Lyde (43–44). But he also begins his entire catalogue with Orpheus, who descended to Hades out of love for Argiope (a variant for the usual Eurydice, 1–14), and Musaeus, who made Antiope renowned even after her death (15–20). In this way he makes love and death themes of the earliest, archetypal poets, suggesting a special affinity between elegy and the oldest forms of Greek poetry. If we add lament to the other elements that Hermesianax associates with the elegiac genre – a poet-lover's devotion to a single woman, a woman whom he names and who is herself cultivated but of socially inferior and perhaps foreign status, perhaps not constant in her affections; a concomitant tendency to exclude homoerotic themes; a tendency to exclude martial or civic themes – then the perspective on elegy that Hermesianax represents comes all the more to resemble that of canonical Roman elegy.

It is difficult not to infer that Hermesianax's selective history of Greek elegy had some influence on the formation of Roman elegy, possibly thanks to the Greek poet-critic Parthenius of Nicaea, who himself composed an elegiac *Arete* in three books in which he lamented the death of his wife (Lightfoot 1999: 31–34) and who dedicated a work on “Disastrous Love Affairs” (περί ἐρωτικῶν παθημάτων) to none other than Gallus, the first of the canonical Roman elegists. But in any case, this perspective was influential in respect to both what the genre included and what it excluded. First and foremost, the Roman poet-lover represents himself as being obsessed with one woman (Gibson 2005, 160). Other women enter into consideration as emblems of jealousy on the part of the *domina* (Prop. 1.3.35–36; 4.7; 4.8), as part of the poet-lover's attempt to cure his infatuation (Tib. 1.5.39–42), or merely as occasional transgressions (Prop. 2.22; Ov. *Am.* 2.7, 8). Boys appear as love objects very infrequently as an element of counterpoint to the main relationship (e.g. Tib. 1.4, 8, 9; Prop. 2.4.17–18; Ov. *Am.* 1.1.20; 1.8.68), somewhat as happens in the Greek novel. The lady with whom the poet-lover is obsessed is, like Mimnermus' Nanno and perhaps other Greek elegiac women (not to mention the *meretrices* of New Comedy: see James 2002, 21–38), a courtesan of non-citizen status. As I have noted, she gives the poet-lover reason to be concerned about rivals.

The theme of death is also well represented in Roman elegy. Tibullus' mind is never far from death, and in poem 1.3 he imagines himself as dying and being taken by Venus to a quasi-Homeric Elysian fields while sinners against love are tortured in Tartarus. Propertius, near the end of his first book, anticipates a future in which either he will mourn for Cynthia or she for him (1.19.15–24); and in book 4 he fulfills this prophecy, devoting an entire poem to a dream in which Cynthia, dead and buried, appears to him from beyond the grave (4.7). In Ovid's *Amores*, poem 2.6 is a humorous lament over the death of Corinna's parrot (alluding to Lesbia's sparrow in Cat. 2 and 3), and poem 3.9 is a moving lament on the death of Tibullus.

On the other hand, Hermesianax's exclusion of martial elegy from his account is reflected in the rejection of martial themes by Roman elegists along with the life of the soldier and all it stands for. For the Roman elegist, martial poetry is epic poetry, and the relation between the two genres was usually conceived as antithetical. That is the point of a passage in which Propertius declares that Mimnermus is a better ally to those in love than Homer is (1.9.11–12). This antipathy of course extends to actual soldiery. Tibullus consistently represents his choice of an indolent, inglorious life as a positive rejection of military values (e.g. 1.3, 10). Propertius is readier to assert that the life of love is superior to the soldier's life on the soldier's own terms: *laus in amore mori*, he says ("it is a praiseworthy thing to die in love" 2.1.47). Thus the theme of *militia amoris*, of being a soldier in the army of love (Murgatroyd 1975), a conceit that receives its wittiest and most extensive expression at the hands of Ovid (*militat omnis amans*, "every lover is a soldier," *Am.* 1.9.1).

Of course, this mix of ingredients can be found in Roman poets who antedate those of Quintilian's elegiac canon. Catullus above all exemplifies many of the genre's defining features: his obsession with one woman; the name that he gives her; the themes of death and lamentation. Poem 68 combines erotic and funereal themes with mythological exempla to form what many critics (e.g. Luck 1982: 407) consider the best surviving example of proto-elegiac poetry. And crucially, Catullus represents outstandingly the personal voice that defines Roman elegy in contrast to its Greek models. We cannot be certain that a similar perspective informed the work of Catullus' contemporaries, like Varro Atacinus and Gaius Licinius Calvus, but these writers did share other elegiac elements. Varro wrote to or about a *puella* whom he called Leucadia, "woman of Leucas"; and the promontory of Leucas (modern Cape Lefkada) was where Sappho (cf. Catullus' Lesbia, "woman of Lesbos"), according to legend, leapt to her death in despondency over her unrequited love for Phaon (Strabo 10.2.9, citing Menander; Suda Φ 89 Adler). Whether death was an explicit theme in Varro's *Leucadia* our sources do not say; but Calvus' *Quintilia* was a lament for the death of his *puella* (Cat. 96) by a poet who also wrote about various other erotic adventures (Prop. 2.34.89–90).

It is interesting that both Propertius and Ovid acknowledge all these poets as elegiac predecessors. In what looks like an early attempt at self-canonization, Propertius names Varro, Catullus, Calvus, Gallus, and himself as Rome's great love poets (2.34.85–94). Similarly Ovid imagines the deceased Tibullus as taking his place alongside Calvus, Catullus, and Gallus in a lover's Elysium (*Am.* 3.9.59–66, a conceit borrowed from Tib. 1.3.57–66). These two poems are very nearly contemporary: Propertius wrote shortly before and Ovid shortly after the death of Vergil and Tibullus in 19 BCE. This fact helps to explain some of the differences between the two lists, but in general they reflect very similar perspectives on the history of the genre as it was understood at that time.

At this point we should pause and take stock. We began by considering Quintilian's canons of Greek and Roman elegy, noting that the two genres appear quite different from one another and that Quintilian is anticipated by Propertius and Ovid in naming Callimachus and Philotas to the Greek canon and Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid to the Roman one. But we then traced the apparent influence of a proto-canon of Greek elegy upon Roman poets in the first century BCE, and noted that Propertius and Ovid also recognize a Roman proto-canon that reflects this influence. It seems, then, that canonical Roman elegy developed under the influence of both these Greek traditions. Can we say more?

Callimachus: Style and Genre

To understand what happened we must return to the Hellenistic period and to Callimachus. In the history of Greek elegy, Philitas is a relatively uncontroversial figure, the only poet who appears in the canons of both Hermesianax and Quintilian. Mimnermus and especially Antimachus are another matter. Hermesianax approved of them, and, if he was Philitas' pupil, then he may have got this opinion from his master. But Callimachus, who lived about two generations after Hermesianax and three after Philitas, did not share it; and thereby hangs a tale.

Like Philitas, but only more so, Callimachus was important as a poet and as a critic, and some passages of his poetry are among the most influential literary-critical documents that we have from antiquity. Here is a passage from the beginning of his *Aetia*:

.....ρεην [ὀλ]ιγόστιχος• ἀλλὰ καθέλκει
 ...]πολὸν τὴν μακρὴν ὄμπνια Θεσμοφόρο[ς.
 τοῖν δὲ] δυοῖν Μίμνερος ὅτι γλυκύς, α[.....
]ἡ μεγάλη δ' οὐκ ἐδίδαξε γυνή.

[...] in few verses; but the nourishing goddess who gives laws far outweighs the long [... But of the] two, that Mimnermus is sweet, [...] but the big woman did not teach.

(Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1.9–12 Pf)

The text is scrappy (even more here than in Pfeiffer 1949, since I exclude some uncertain supplements), but we are helped to interpret it by a pair of ancient commentaries (also in Pfeiffer 1949). Lines 9–10 appear to contrast a long poem on some unknown topic with one that Callimachus prefers, which the commentaries identify as Philitas' *Demeter*. Then (11–12) there is a contrast between two other poems, one teaching that Mimnermus is sweet, while the other – which Callimachus calls “the big woman” – does not. The commentaries say that “the big woman” is Mimnermus' *Nanno*; some modern scholars think that there must also (or instead) be a swipe at Antimachus' *Lyde* on the basis of a fragment from one of Callimachus' other works: Λύδη, καὶ παχὺ γράμμα καὶ οὐ τορόν, “*Lyde*, a screed both thick and unclear” (fr. 398 Pf; Matthews 1996, 65–66).

Care is obviously needed, but some conclusions can be drawn. It seems that Callimachus approved of Philitas' *Demeter* but disapproved of or said nothing about his *Bittis*; approved of something by Mimnermus, but perhaps not his *Nanno*; and, whatever he thought of Antimachus' other poetry, hated his *Lyde*. This is a very different perspective from that of Hermesianax, one that emphasizes Philitas' aetiological poetry and deprecates the poems that Mimnermus and Antimachus dedicated to the women they loved. It may be that Callimachus' objections have more to do with style than content, and it is not clear whether they have to do with elegy as a genre. But the passage can be taken that way, so that Callimachus appears not to approve of the kind of poetry on which Hermesianax had based his elegiac canon (Cameron 1995, 303–39).

The Roman elegists thus found almost diametrically different perspectives on elegy in their Hellenistic predecessors. Their response was evidently to borrow such elements as the persona of the poet-lover, the exotic *puella*, the theme of lamentation, and so forth

from the tradition outlined by Hermesianax. But, like virtually all Roman poets, they also came under the immense influence of Callimachus' opinions regarding poetic style.

This influence becomes especially visible and nearly inescapable in the first century BCE. It has mainly to do with ideals that apply equally to many genres of poetry, according to which qualities such as "few," "small," "light," and "thin" contrast favorably with "many," "large," "heavy," and "thick." In some cases a Roman poet draws a Callimachean contrast within a single genre, as Vergil does in the sixth *Eclogue* to justify his singing slender, pastoral epic instead of inflated, heroic epic (3–8). But it was also common for elegy to define epic exclusively as heroic poetry and to contrast itself with epic as a "slighter" or "humbler" genre (Prop. 2.1, 3.3; Ov. *Am.* 1.1). Thus the elegists tend to use Callimachean ideas and images to promote the cause of elegy at the expense of epic.

Consider in this regard Propertius' poems to Ponticus in book 1. This friend with a triumphal name is introduced as attempting to write an epic *Thebaid* that will rival Homer for first place in the epic canon while Propertius tries to win fame as a love elegist (7.1–10). The poem concludes by warning Ponticus not to look down on Propertius' efforts (*cave ... contemnas* 25): should Ponticus ever fall in love, his expertise in heroic verse will be no use to him as he tries to write love poetry, and he will envy Propertius his elegiac skill (15–26). Here it is relevant that Antimachus was the author of an epic *Thebaid* that won him, according to Quintilian, second place to Homer in the Greek canon, but that was deficient in all aspects of its artistry, "so that it is really quite obvious how different it is to be close to first than it is to be second" (*Inst.* 10.1.53). Propertius thus predicts for Ponticus an Antimachean career, moving unsuccessfully from epic to elegy. This is close to what Hermesianax had said about Antimachus: whatever his previous accomplishments, when it came to love he had to retool himself as an elegist. But it is also close to Callimachus' opinion that the *Lyde* was a failure. To this extent, Propertius seems to reconcile the two traditions. In another poem (1.9) he refers again to Ponticus' contempt (*irrisor* 1) and tells him that a line of Mimnermus is more useful to the lover than Homer, presumably in his entirety (11–12). Here we may recall that, according to Hermesianax, Homer wrote the *Odyssey* and then fell in love with Penelope, his own creation.

Propertius clearly wrote these poems with Hellenistic debates about the epic and elegiac canons in mind. We have already seen that he was thinking about the composition of the Roman elegiac canon in the final poem of his second book. Then in the first poem of book 3 he returns to the Greek canon, invoking Callimachus and Philitas, the Greek poets of Quintilian's elegiac canon, "calling them out" in a sense different from the one that Quintilian intended. The gesture is complicated by the fact that Callimachus was both a canonical elegist and a symbol of certain stylistic ideals; also by the fact that these ideals transcended generic categories and that Roman elegies were not much like his. An ambivalence is thus present in the image of the "uncontaminated source" (*puro de fonte*, Prop. 3.1.3), which is specifically Callimachean (*Hymn* 2.108–12) and is adapted by poets of many different genres as an emblem of stylistic refinement (e.g. Lucr. 1.927 = 4.2; Hor. *Sat.* 1.1.55–56; Ov. *Am.* 2.16.1–2; see Kambylis 1965, 98–102; Wimmel 1960, 272–74). But by calling out Callimachus and Philitas as the *auctores* who define the Greek elegiac canon, Propertius is claiming to go directly back to the source in another sense: not just the source of refined stylistic inspiration that is available to all

poets, but to the canonical model of elegiac excellence. Similarly, when he claims the title *Callimachus Romanus* (4.1.64), he is not just boasting about his refined style but asserting that there should be a canon of Roman elegiac poets and that he should be in it.

Already at the end of book 2 (34.31–32) Propertius had singled out Callimachus and Philitas as defining the Greek elegiac canon, and he was to do so repeatedly in books 3 and 4 (3.9.43–44; 4.6.3–4; cf. 3.3.52). And it is in these late stages of his career that Propertius does begin to produce poems on Roman aetiological topics that are in keeping with the substance of Callimachus' *Aetia*. He does not abandon the characteristic themes of the earlier books, but he greatly complicates them by adopting a more Callimachean (i.e. aetiological, narrative) conception of elegy. He writes about religious festivals and historical monuments (while emphasizing any possible erotic elements) and even introduces Roman matrons and allows them to speak (although they tend to speak in elegiac language, one even describing herself as a *puella*: 4.3.45, 72). Tibullus, too, devotes one poem to the festival of the Ambarvalia (2.1) and another to the elevation of his patron's son to Roman priestly office (2.5). Ovid writes about a religious festival held in honor of Juno Curitis, a goddess who presides over, of all things, marriage; accordingly, in this same poem (*Am.* 3.13) he goes so far as to introduce the reader to his wife!

This interest in religious matters and social conventions on the part of all three elegists is something one meets in the final books of their respective oeuvres. Is it then a sign of each poet's ambition, once he had exhausted the possibilities presented by the genre, to enlarge it so as to encompass quite different themes? And to what extent is this expansion related to Propertius' heightened interest in the Greek elegiac canon? Ovid, too, mentions Callimachus and Philitas as a pair not in the *Amores*, but in his erotodidactic works (*Ars* 3.329; *Rem.* 759–760), which he wrote after he had in effect left canonical Roman elegy behind and embarked on a program of meta-elegiac exploration that would occupy him for the remainder of his career. After the *Amores*, everything that Ovid wrote engages with elegiac forms and motifs in ways that take him well outside the boundaries of the genre. The erotodidactic poems, the *Ars amatoria*, the *Remedia amoris*, and the *Medicamina faciei femineae*, deal with erotic themes but challenge the conventional elegiac paradigm both formally (they are much longer than any previous elegy) and in how they define the elegiac lover and his condition. Instead of an abject figure enslaved to an imperious female, Ovid the *praeceptor amoris* (*Ars* 1.17) presents himself as a technical expert and effective teacher, masterful and successful in all aspects of love and sex, treating women as so much prey. (The metaphor of hunting runs right through the poem: see Gibson 2003, 274.) But this is to describe only books 1 and 2, which are addressed to men; book 3 inverts the paradigm and advises the "Amazons" (*Ars* 2.743, 3.1) how to win these battles themselves. Thus any idea of a specially charged relationship between one man and one woman totally disappears from view. The *Remedia* takes this reversal a step further, replacing the idea of an Art of Love with its opposite. Thus if the *Ars* challenges the central assumptions of love elegy, the *Remedia* virtually does away with them (Conte 1994, 35–65).

In the *Heroides* – love letters written as if by mythic heroines to their absent lovers – we find something more in keeping with conventional love elegy. But again the gender dynamics of the collection is crucially different. Here the lover speaks not with one, masculine voice but through a multiplicity of feminine personae. And these are not

fickle, untrustworthy *puellae*, but each is devoted to or even obsessed with an individual, often faithless man. Just as important if not more so, it is the women in love, not a man in love, who are represented as writing (Farrell 1998). Each of these elements reverses the norms of canonical elegiac poetry and of Roman literary culture itself. A second collection of *Heroides*, somewhat in the fashion of *Ars amatoria* 3, complicates matters further by representing *exchanges* of correspondence between various mythical couples (in each case a man writes to a woman who then replies). Both collections engage imaginatively with canonical elegy (Spath 1992), but their material is that of mythological narrative and drama (Jacobson 1974) and their form is enormously indebted to the conventions of epistolography (Kennedy 1984). Much as the *Ars* and the *Remedia* adapt elegy to the conventions of didactic poetry, both collections of *Heroides* are ambitious experiments in generic hybridity.

It is interesting and significant that narrative becomes more and more prominent in Ovid's later work. In the *Heroides*, as I just mentioned, narrative and dramatic poetry provides much of the material for the first-person accounts of the various heroic women. The *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* are themselves masterpieces of narratological bricolage. In this respect, they are both formally closer to canonical Greek elegy than to the genre of the *Amores*. Nevertheless, both poems are deeply informed by Roman elegiac convention. The *Metamorphoses* of course is not formally an elegiac poem at all but Ovid's one surviving poem in the epic meter. But connoisseurs of style understand that Ovid's epic is in many respects (diction, sentence structure, even some aspects of prosody) composed as if it were an elegiac poem (Knox 1986). Still, it is clear that the poem generates a lot of its energy from Ovid's ability to manipulate readerly expectations by his sophisticated negotiation of generic signals – particularly those of epic and elegy (Hinds 1986), although his approach is so radical that traditional conceptions of genre can hardly account for it (Farrell 1992).

Much the same thing can be said about the *Fasti*, which is in so many ways the twin of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid composed both poems during the same period, and, while the *Metamorphoses* introduces itself as an epic departure from Ovid's predominantly elegiac career (Kovacs 1987), the *Fasti* demands to be read both as a return to and an adventurous expansion of the elegiac genre. The meter, once again, is elegiac, but this is a constant subject of anxious reflection because the poem's "weighty" subject matter – Roman history and religion, astronomical phenomena, the monumental fabric of the Augustan city – is (by convention) incompatible with or requires careful assimilation to the elegiac form (e.g. *Fast.* 1.1–8; 2.3–8, 119–26; 4.10; 6.21–22; Hinds 1992a).

This is hardly a canonical Roman elegy. Instead, it is aetiological narrative elegy – in effect, canonical Greek elegy – written in Latin (Miller 1982, 1991). The *Fasti* is closer in form to Callimachus' *Aetia* than anything else in Roman poetry. Like Callimachus, Ovid adopts the persona not of an *amator* or even a *praeceptor amoris*, but that of an elder *cicerone* who is well versed not in the ways of the heart but in the origins of certain cults and, especially, in the history of the calendar. Both poets question a number of interlocutors, including the Muses themselves. Both poems are substantial but highly episodic and are organized in pairs of books (two pairs in the *Aetia*, three in the *Fasti*). Ovid clearly designed the *Fasti* as a Roman counterpart to Callimachus' *Aetia*, and in this sense he produced the single Roman poem that best represents the form and the spirit of canonical Greek elegy (Wahlberg 2008).

Its relationship to canonical Roman elegy, however, is rather tenuous, or perhaps vestigial. The point is not that there are a few poems of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid's own *Amores* that anticipate the ritual focus of the *Fasti*: these predecessors do not make aetiological narrative a normative part of canonical Roman elegy. It makes more sense to view these efforts as occasional gestures towards the Greek genre. By contrast, Propertian aetiological elegy and Ovidian meta-elegiac poetry refer constantly both to their Greek models, with their focus on narrative, and to the norms of Roman love elegy, as well. They take for granted the idea that elegy is especially suited to be the vehicle for subjective reflections on love; and this is perhaps the main thing that distinguishes the *Fasti* from the *Aetia*, in which love, as I noted previously, is a theme but hardly the most important one. Thus the *Fasti* narrator eroticizes his material in order to make the matter fit the meter (Hinds 1992a). For these and other reasons the *Fasti* is better understood, like the *Metamorphoses*, not as a poem that belongs to the genre of elegy but as a virtuosic display of generic sophistication in which elegy is only one of the elements, and not in any obvious sense the principal one, that is on display.

After his relegation to Tomis, Ovid produced the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, which bear a similarly fascinating relationship to canonical elegy without being of it. Both collections are concerned with Ovid's plight and have as their goal to secure his recall to Rome or at least to some less distant place. The subject seems inherently un-elegiac. By virtue of their epistolary form, which is explicit in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* and implicit in most of the *Tristia*, these poems have a lot in common with the *Heroides*. And the *Ars amatoria* is a frequent theme in both collections (*Tr.* 2.8, 240, 251, 303, 345; 3.14.6; 5.12.68, *Pont.* 1.1.12; 2.2.104, 9.73, 76, 10.12, 11.2; 3.3.70). But if anything, these poems belong even more than the *Heroides* to the genre of epistolography. Their most obvious relationship to elegiac convention has not to do with love or with aetiology (although both of these themes are present in the collection: see Miller 2004, 210–36) but with the title of the *Tristia* – “Sorrows” – which alludes to elegy as a genre of lamentation, a conceit that carries through both collections, in which the exile poet presents his existence in Tomis as a form of living death. And Ovid's own career, including his identity as the poet of the *Amores*, is an important theme as well (although the *Ars*, which Ovid alleges was an important reason for his relegation, looms even larger). But to argue that the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto* can therefore be considered part of the elegiac canon would involve more than just special pleading.

In this respect we may include the *Ibis*, a curse poem that bears no obvious relationship to canonical Roman elegy but, like the *Fasti* and if anything even more so, is modeled on a specific poem of Callimachus, the chief poet of the Greek elegiac canon. It is as if Ovid, at the end of his career, had become a generic fundamentalist, moving beyond canonical Roman elegy in a way that takes him closer to canonical Greek elegy, and especially to Callimachus, than any Roman poet, in any genre, had ever come.

I hope I have shown why it is valid to consider the genre of Roman elegy from two perspectives. On the one hand, an expansive definition of the genre as one that embraces Catullus as well as Ovid's exile poetry, is certainly defensible. On the other, it seems to me difficult to come to terms with what I have called proto-elegy and meta-elegy until one comes to terms with the essentializing impulse of canonical Roman elegy – the poetry of (presumably) Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid in his *Amores*. It is here that the Romans truly called out the Greeks by creating out of inherited ingredients

something that was new and unparalleled. It was an achievement upon which they built in amazing ways, but it is also one that deserves to be understood in and of itself.

FURTHER READING

The central issues of this chapter are addressed in the context of ancient genre theory in Farrell 2003. For a fuller account of Greek elegy in the Hellenistic period see Murray 2010. On the essential aspects of canonical Roman elegy Kennedy 1993 is excellent. Miller 2004 takes a different approach to the definition of elegy as a genre: he considers Catullus an elegist in much the same sense as the poets of Quintilian's canon, and does not distinguish (as I have in this chapter) between canonical elegy and meta-elegiac poetry. Hunter 2006 is an incisive, up-to-date point of entry into the study of Callimachus' influence on Roman poetry. For the influence of Callimachean aetiological elegy, see Miller 1982, Miller 1991, and Wahlberg 2008. A number of factors that influenced the development of Ovid's career are discussed by Harrison 2002, Tarrant 2002, and Farrell 2004. On the various aspects of what I have called Ovid's meta-elegiac poetry see: (*Ars, Rem., Med.*) Conte 1994; (*Her.*) Kennedy 1984, Spoth 1992, Farrell 1998; (*Met.*) Knox 1986, Hinds 1986, Farrell 1992; (*Fasti*) Hinds 1986, 1992a, 1992b; (*Tr., Pont.*) Nagle 1980, Williams 1994; (*Ib.*) Williams 1996.

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